

National

Heathrow security to trial privacy-friendly bodyscanners

Dan Milmo

Heathrow is paving the way for a wider shake-up of airline security checks by introducing privacy-friendly bodyscanners that replace graphic images of the human torso with a cartoon-like picture. The changes could mean the end of metal detectors and full body searches.

Britain's largest airport has launched a trial using millimetre-wave scanners that bounce electromagnetic waves, instead of x-ray beams, off a passenger's body. Travellers who set off metal detectors will be taken to the passenger-screening area, where they will be allowed to look

at the scanner's image with security officers. If there is a suspicious package on the person, it will show up as a yellow box on a mannequin-like representation of the passenger's body.

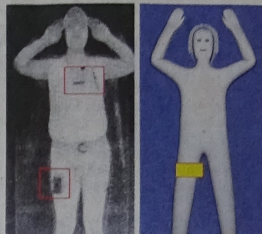
"It will be effective security and a much better passenger experience," said Ian Hutcheson, director of security at BAA, which owns Heathrow and other UK airports, graphic images of passengers' bodies are viewed by security officials in an enclosed area. BAA plans to use the new scanners in all its airports if the trial is successful.

Hutcheson said bodyscanners could ultimately replace metal detectors as the main technology for screening passengers.

Bodyscanners were tried in the UK after Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian student, nearly brought down Northwest Airlines flight 800 to Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 when he set off an explosive device in his underwear. However, Manchester airport, which uses scanners that deploy low-level x-ray beams, said millimetre-wave scanners were less efficient.

"We don't believe that it is sufficiently developed for operational use," said a spokesman. "For example, it cannot penetrate wet clothing, so if it rains - and we are to be removed."

Hutcheson added that bodyscanners could be put into widespread use as part



The old scanner, left, shows the torso; the new, right, uses cartoon-like images

of a new airport security regime that will subject passengers to different levels of security checks. The US Transportation Security Administration is developing a programme that would favour low-risk travellers if they supply advance information such as frequent-flyer details and travel records, allowing them to pass through security areas more quickly.

BAA has already introduced a new level of security at Heathrow by training staff in behavioural detection. Staff have been trained to detect suspicious or anomalous behaviour by travellers. If staff remain concerned after questioning them, those passengers are then referred to immigration officers or police.

Jewish leaders offer support to 'vilified' Dale Farm Travellers

Matthew Taylor

Members of the Jewish community visited the Dale Farm Travellers' camp yesterday to offer their support to 400 people facing eviction from the green belt site in Essex.

On Friday a UN committee called on the government to suspend the "immature and unwise" eviction, saying it would "disproportionately affect the lives of the Gypsy and Traveller families, particularly women, children and older people".

The camp has also received support from Franciscan monks, who last week blessed the site, as well as Anglican and Catholic bishops.

Rabbi Janet Burden said: "People may not be aware that the Travellers, along with the Gypsies and a limited number of other groups with similar lifestyle patterns, are officially recognised as ethnic minorities, just like our own Jewish community. As such, they deserve protection under European human rights law."

Burden compared the "vilification" of Travellers to the discrimination Jews faced in the first half of the 20th century.

"The language used clearly echoes the rhetoric of antisemitism," she said. "If you don't believe this, have a look at the website jewify.org for examples of newspaper articles which substitute the word Jew for Gypsy or Traveller. The results are quite chilling. I believe that the obligation to protect this ethnic minority's way of life is a human rights issue that, in this particu-

'The language used against the Travellers echoes the rhetoric of antisemitism'

lar and unusual case, may need to trump the planning law designed to protect the green belt."

The Jewish "solidarity group" attended a number of workshops at the site to discuss the campaign and the plight of Traveller families.

Last week Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, warned there was a great risk of human rights violations if the council pressed ahead with its proposals.

"If they go ahead with the eviction that would be very immature and unwise," Hammarberg said.

"The only way to do this is for the government or the authority in Basildon to appoint people who have trust on both sides to find an agreed solution."

Tony Ball, leader of Basildon council, has repeatedly defended the eviction saying the proposals have been tested through the courts.

"Everyone is entitled to their views," he said last week. "I'm clear that the

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